



**House Bill No. 7159**

**Public Act No. 17-29**

***AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S SEAL OF BILITERACY.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 10-5 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

(a) The Commissioner of Education shall, in accordance with this section, issue a state high school diploma to any person (1) who successfully completes an examination approved by the commissioner, or (2) who (A) is seventeen years of age and has been officially withdrawn from school in accordance with the provisions of section 10-184 or is eighteen years of age or older, and (B) presents to the commissioner evidence demonstrating educational qualifications which the commissioner deems equivalent to those required for graduation from a public high school. Application for such a diploma shall be made in the manner and form prescribed by the commissioner provided, at the time of application to take the examination described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, the applicant is seventeen years of age or older, has been officially withdrawn from school, in accordance with section 10-184, for at least six months and has been advised, in such manner as may be prescribed by the commissioner, of the other options for high school completion and other available educational programs. For good cause shown, the commissioner may allow a

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person who is sixteen years of age to apply to take the examination, provided the commissioner may not issue a state high school diploma to such person until the person has attained seventeen years of age.

(b) Application to take or retake the examination described in subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section shall be accompanied by a money order or certified check in the nonrefundable amount of thirteen dollars. This amount shall include the fee for the state high school diploma.

(c) No veteran, member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, or any person under twenty-one years of age shall be required to pay the fees described in subsection (b) of this section. The commissioner may waive any fee described in subsection (b) upon the submission of evidence indicating an inability to pay.

(d) The Commissioner of Education shall keep a correct account of all money received under the provisions of this section and shall deposit with the State Treasurer all such money received by said commissioner. Funds paid to a local or regional board of education under this section shall be deposited in the school activity fund established under section 10-237 and expended to defray the costs of such testing and related administration and information.

(e) The commissioner shall establish criteria by which an "honors diploma" may be issued for exemplary performance on the examination.

(f) Not later than September 1, 2017, the State Board of Education shall establish criteria by which a local or regional board of education may affix the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy on a diploma awarded to a student who has achieved a high level of proficiency in English and one or more foreign languages. For purposes of this subsection, "foreign language" means a world language other than

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English and includes American Sign Language and any other language spoken by a federally recognized Native American tribe.

Sec. 2. Section 10-221a of the general statutes is amended by adding subsection (k) as follows (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

(NEW) (k) Commencing with classes graduating in 2018, and for each graduating class thereafter, a local or regional board of education may affix the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy, as described in subsection (f) of section 10-5, as amended by this act, to a diploma awarded to a student who has achieved a high level of proficiency in English and one or more foreign languages, as defined in said subsection (f). The local or regional board of education shall include on such student's transcript a designation that the student received the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy.